

## **Upper Mississippi River- Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study – Principals Group Position**

The Federal Principals Group for the Upper Mississippi River –Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study has strongly endorsed the framework for completion of the feasibility study that is presented in the Interim Report on the restructured study. A draft of the Interim Report was released in early May 2002 and the final Interim Report will be completed by late July 2002. In addition to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Principals Group consists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Maritime Administration. The Principals Group finds that the restructured feasibility study will fully address the goal of assuring an economically efficient and environmentally sustainable navigation system. The complete Principals Group Position is presented below.

1 July 2002

### **INTERIM REPORT FOR THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND ILLINOIS WATERWAY SYSTEM RESTRUCTURED NAVIGATION STUDY**

#### **FEDERAL PRINCIPALS GROUP POSITION**

1. This document reflects the position of the Federal Principals Group on the status of the restructured navigation study and the framework for completion of the feasibility study as outlined in the Interim Report. These positions do not in any way limit the prerogatives of any of the member Federal agencies or preclude the agencies from providing additional comments on the Interim Report.
2. The Principals Group finds that the framework for completion of the feasibility study presented in the Interim Report is consistent with the Principals Group 25 June 2001 guidance for restructuring the navigation study. Pursuant to that guidance, the Interim Report does not present recommendations to Congress for consideration in the Water Resources Development Act of 2002 and is not a decision document. The full economic and environmental evaluations necessary to support a potential recommendation for construction of navigation improvements or implementation of ecosystem restoration measures have not been completed.
3. The Interim Report provides a framework for addressing the cumulative environmental effects of navigation and the needs for ecosystem restoration as an integral part of the restructured navigation study with a goal of an environmentally sustainable navigation system. The Principals Group endorses adding ecosystem restoration as an authorized purpose of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway navigation system and supports the concept of developing an implementation plan for ecosystem restoration which incorporates both 100 percent Federal and cost shared components.

4. The Principals Group endorses the scenarios presented in the Interim Report as capturing a plausible range of future navigation system traffic over a 50-year horizon. The Principals Group recognizes that the Interim Report commits to integrating an adaptive management concept in formulating and implementing navigation improvement and ecosystem restoration plans. The Principals Group supports continued monitoring and analysis of environmental and economic conditions and responses to assure that the plans for navigation improvements and environmental restoration are efficient and effective and appropriately modified and adjusted to meet changing conditions and emerging science.

5. The Principals Group is aware of the controversy surrounding the development of a spatial equilibrium model for the economic evaluation of navigation improvements. The Principals reviewed the findings of the National Research Council and, while endorsing these findings, concluded that a fully developed and tested spatial equilibrium model was unlikely to be achieved in a reasonable time frame for feasibility study completion consistent with stakeholder and Congressional expectations. The Principals support use of existing economic models while research and development on improved models moves forward but within the context of an adaptive management process that would review study results as new models are developed, tested and accepted. The Principals also note that the recommendation development process for the feasibility study will recognize the high level of uncertainty surrounding projections of navigation system traffic and anticipate that decision makers will seek alternative plans that are justified under a wide range of future system traffic conditions and enjoy a broad level of stakeholder support.

6. The Principals Group approves the process of developing a range of measures representing progressive levels of navigation investment in both non-structural and structural measures. The Group also concurs with the process of formulating environmental restoration measures to reflect progressive levels of investment in meeting identified restoration goals and objectives. The Interim Report describes a process of combining these navigation and environmental measures into alternative plans and evaluating the economic and environmental performance of these plans using the scenarios and environmental goals and objectives. The Principals Group believes that the successful implementation of this process should provide decision makers the information needed to make an informed recommendation on implementation of modifications to the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway system. Criteria that would be used by decision makers include the degree to which the alternative plan or combination of alternative plans contribute to national economic development and national ecosystem restoration under a range of scenarios, the relative risk of selecting or not selecting the plan, the degree to which the plan is supported by a wide range of interests, and the flexibility and adaptability of the plan.

7. The Principals Group applauds the collaborative process in restarting the restructured navigation study and preparing the Interim Report and encourages continued collaboration in the completion of the feasibility study and implementation of the resulting recommendations.

8. Assuring the continuation of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway Navigation System as a nationally significant transportation system and ecosystem resource will necessitate the involvement of all the Federal agencies making up the Principals Group. The opportunities and approaches for leveraging the authorities and programs of all the involved Federal agencies should be explored as the study progresses.

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